

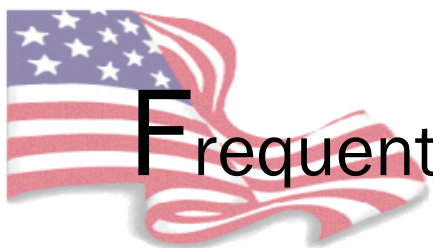


Presidential Mock Election 2008



School Coordinator Packet

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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Mock Election and who is conducting this project?

A mock election is a process by which students get to vote on their favorite candidates without having their vote count in the “official election.” In our Mock Election, Louisiana’s students will get to vote for a presidential candidate and have their votes tallied with other students across the nation. The Secretary of State’s office is planning the election in conjunction with Cox Communications and the National Student/Parent Mock Election.

What is the National Student/Parent Mock Election?

The National Student/Parent Mock Election is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that makes students aware of the power of their ballot by actively involving them in a full-fledged campaign and national election. More than 40 million people have participated since the project began in 1980.

Why should I encourage my students to participate in the program?

This is a fantastic education opportunity for the students. It gives them a vested interest in who is elected president, and it stokes interest in the voting process at an early age.

Additionally, Cox Communications is conducting a computer giveaway. All participating schools will be entered in the drawing.

How does my school register to participate in the program?

Participating schools should sign up online at www.nationalmockelection.org. Click the Enroll Now button in the upper left corner of the webpage. Schools may also go to the Secretary of State’s Web site (www.GeauxVote.com) where there is a link to the online enrollment form. The form will ask for information regarding the name and location of the school, the contact information for the school coordinator, and the estimated number of students participating.

When is the deadline for registering?

Oct. 20 is the deadline to register, but we strongly encourage schools to register as early as possible. Registering early gives schools more time to plan and conduct their elections.

What is the next step once I have enrolled my school in the program?

You will be sent a unique PIN for each student to be used on Election Day. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the PINs, please contact the Secretary of State's Outreach Division at 225.342.4479.

What equipment is needed to vote?

At least one computer with Internet access is needed to participate in the voting process.

How do the students vote?

Once seated at a computer (i.e. voting booth), students will logon to the Website, enter their PIN, and cast their ballot for the election.

How do you recommend organizing the election for our school?

Your school may choose to elect a registrar and clerk for the election. The offices can be selected by a vote of the student council or the entire student body.

- The registrar will be in charge of the student list (i.e. the voter roll) and PINs. He or she will make sure that each student is assigned a PIN and that each student only votes once.
- The clerk will be in charge of conducting the election. On the day of the election, students will be sent to their computer lab or library to access the computers. Students can be sent alphabetically or by class. The election can be conducted all on one day or over several days.

Your school may also elect to have the duties of the registrar and clerk conducted by a member of the faculty. This might be a particularly good idea for middle and elementary school students.

When can the students vote?

Once you have received the PINs for your students, they may vote at any time during the Mock Election from Oct. 20 to Oct. 30. This will give you an opportunity to pick a day (or multiple days) that works best for your school.

NOTE: Voting must be completed prior to 1 p.m. on Oct. 30.

How long should the voting process take?

Based on private elections conducted by the Secretary of State's Outreach Division, the voting process can take roughly 30 to 45 seconds per student.

What is the Celebration Event?

The Celebration Event is the culmination of voting activities. It will be at the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge on Oct. 30.

Who is invited to the Celebration Event?

Superintendents will select one high school boy and one high school girl from their district, along with a chaperone to attend the event. Government officials and spokespersons for the Obama and McCain campaigns will also deliver speeches about the importance of civic engagement.

When will we know the voting results for our school?

Results will be available on the afternoon of Oct. 30.

Whom should we contact if we have a question or comment?

Please visit the Presidential Mock Election Website at www.GeauxVote.com or contact the Secretary of State Outreach Division at 225.342.4479 should you have any questions.

Important Dates

Oct. 20 — First Day of Voting

Oct. 20 — Registration Deadline

Oct. 30 — Last Day to Vote

Oct. 30 — Celebration Event



Fact Sheet

The National Student/Parent Mock Election

**The nation's oldest, largest and most successful
voter education project**

What is the National Student/Parent Mock Election?

- The National Student/Parent Mock Election is the nation's largest and most successful voter education program. Usually funded by Congress, the National Student/Parent Mock Election is authorized in both No Child Left Behind and the Help America Vote Act.
- Past participation:
 - o 1982: 250,000 American students took part
 - o 1984: 2 million students
 - o 1988: 3.5 million students
 - o 1992: 5 million students
 - o 1996 and 2000: a total of more than 10 million votes were cast. In the 2000 Mock Election, more than 1 million votes were cast via the Internet, the greatest number ever for a politically-oriented event.
 - o 2006: 1,232,613 votes. Note that NSPME remained "the nation's largest voter education project," well ahead of any of its competitors both in number of states involved (all 50) and in number of votes achieved, despite having lost its congressional funding.

- Participants include kindergarteners and elementary, secondary and college students in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and in American schools all around the world. Since the Mock Election began in 1980, almost 50 million young voters, and often their parents as well, have participated.
- Seventy-three percent of the states partner with the National Student/Parent Mock Election, which is endorsed by the National Association of Secretaries of State. In 2006, 20 states were coordinated or co-coordinated by their secretary of state or state election director. In others, the governor or another state official has formalized the partnership while some states are coordinated by such groups as the League of Women Voters or the state's Council for the Social Studies.
- Sixty national educational, civic, business and religious organizations cooperate with the project including the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the National School Boards Association, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Council for the Social Studies, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the League of Women Voters of the United States. See the full list at www.nationalmockelection.org/why_supporters.html.
- Outstanding Mock Election projects nominated at the school, school district and state level receive awards from the National Association of State Boards of Education, the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Student Councils and the League of Women Voters.

Why is the National Student/Parent Mock Election important to America?

Educating the next generation of young voters remains an urgent need:

- An American Bar Association poll, released in August 2004, found that Americans are not sure what the separation of powers means. Only 56 percent could identify the three branches of government, and one in five thought the answer was democrat, republican and independent. Six percent thought the separation of powers meant "republicans can do some things, but democrats can do others" and 27 percent thought it meant that the Department of Justice has different duties than the Department of Defense. That same year, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation announced the results of survey of the nation's teenagers: one-third of the students believed the Bill of Rights went too far.

- Eight out of ten 15- to 26-year-olds know that the animated Simpson's family lives in Springfield, but fewer than half know the political party of their state's governor, and only 40 percent can say which party controls Congress, a 2004 Rutgers study found.

While youth voting rates have increased in recent years, our work is not done:

- Young people 18-31 will number 50 million in 2008. By 2015, they will constitute one-third of the electorate.
- The present generation of young Americans younger than 18 constitutes the largest population group in the nation's history. According to CIRCLE's The Youth Vote 2004, youth voting surged by 11 percentage points in 2004. In presidential election years between 1972 and 2000, the turnout rate had declined by 16 percentage points among young citizens before rebounding by 11 percentage points in the 2004 election.
- In the 2006 midterm elections, nearly two million more Americans under 30 voted as compared to the 2002 midterm elections, according to the Pew Charitable Trust.

The youth turnout increased from 22.5 percent in 2002 to 25.5 percent in 2006, a 3 percent gain and the greatest percentage increase in turnout for any age group for the consecutive elections, the Pew study said.

- In the 2008 elections, it appears the youth vote will have an even greater impact in deciding America's future course as increasing numbers of young people go to the polls. Concern over some of the burning issues of our time, including the war in Iraq, the economy and immigration, have no doubt stirred young voters. But there are indications that our Mock Elections have educated and inspired students and often their parents to learn more about their civic responsibilities and to register and vote.
- Two-thirds of young people said they had already voted or were likely to vote. But those most likely NOT to vote included 51 percent of Latinos, 46 percent of youth with high school or lower education level, 44 percent of non-college women, 43 percent of independents and 40 percent of women in the South.
- Another fact in the upcoming elections, as we continue to reach out to all students and their parents, is the growing number of nonwhite Americans, who now top 100 million for the first time.

"The new demographic divide has broader implications for social programs and education spending for youth," Mark Mather, deputy director of domestic programs for the Population Reference Bureau, a nonpartisan research group, said. More than 20 percent of children in the United States are foreign born or have a parent who was foreign born. Nearly half of the children under 5 are Hispanic, black or Asian, according to the U.S. Census. We must help all children and their parents to become educated, informed voters.

We cannot underestimate the influence that future young voters will have in shaping our nation:

- Eighty-eight percent of Americans want their children taught about elections, democracy and ethical behavior starting in elementary schools and continuing through high school, according to a July marketing survey for Leo J. Shapiro & Associates in Chicago. Elections and democracy are central to what the Mock Election stands for.
- The University of Colorado’s evaluation found that participating in the National Student/Parent Mock Election increased political decision-making ability, the belief that voting is important, informed involvement on current issues, the belief that social studies classes are relevant, and the discussion of political and election topics with parents. Participation decreased the sense of powerlessness.

Years of hard work and voter education have made a difference — we simply cannot slow down now.

- Recommendations for effective voter mobilization published in 2006 by the Circle for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) include starting with the youth, particularly among ethnic and immigrant populations: “Young voters in these communities are easier to reach, are more likely to speak English (cutting down translation costs), and are the most effective messengers within their communities.” Another fact is that initial mobilization produces repeat voters. If people have been motivated to get to the polls once, they are more likely to return. So, getting young people to vote early could be the key to raising a new generation of voters.
- Retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor urged the nation’s governors to push for improved civics instruction in public schools that would help students appreciate the separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

“The need to educate our youth about our government and how it works is crucial to our future as a nation,” Justice O’Connor said. “We don’t inherit that through the gene pool; we have to do it.”

How did the National Student/Parent Mock Election begin?

The National Student/Parent Mock Election began as part of NBC’s Parent Participation TV Workshops Project, produced by Edward Stanley and Gloria Kirshner. The workshops sought to teach parents how to use television dramas to open communication with their children, mold their values and discover and develop their identity and future goals. After identifying the elections as a huge national drama that could enable parents and children to communicate more effectively with each other, the first National Student/Parent Mock Election (NSPME) ran in 1980. In 1982, the NSPME was spun off as a separate nonprofit, nonpartisan organization devoted to helping students and parents to become educated, informed voters and active participants in this democracy.

What happens in a National Student/Parent Mock Election?

Picture this:

It is five days before Election Day and many media are represented at national headquarters for the National Student/Parent Mock Election, watching as the results come in from all 50 states and American schools around the world. The voices of millions of young Americans are about to be heard.

The students have studied the candidates and their positions, held issues forums and debates, mock press conferences, cable call-in programs and get-out-the-vote campaigns. They have been preparing for weeks, even months, for this event. Schools have appointed school coordinators while students and parents have decorated their school election headquarters. Some have borrowed voting machines from local election officials while others are preparing to vote on their school computers and send their votes electronically to their state election headquarters or to national election headquarters. Some will be tallying paper ballots and transmitting their results by phone or fax. In many of the classrooms and at many of the state election headquarters, governors, senators, congressmen and candidates are joining the young voters and often parents too. Tonight is their night.

At national election headquarters on Mock Election Day there is a flurry of activity. Who will verify that each state's vote comes in at the appointed time? Who will call if a state is missing? Who will take care of the schools that have lost their Web-voting ID? Who will enter the thousands of faxes and add the votes to each state's totals? Who will handle the phoned-in votes? How about the HelpLine? How about the overseas schools and the American students all around the world? Are there enough blank ballots to record the votes?

Is each state's ballot accurate? Can we keep it all straight? Will a state coordinator go to dinner and forget to send in an entire state's vote? The press has been promised national totals by the end of the evening. Can we make it? Who will be handling the press calls? The TV cameras?

Suddenly the vast room is quiet. It is time for the votes to start pouring in. Each state has a required reporting time, ready or not. Fifty states must report at five-minute intervals. Will all 50 make it? Will all the overseas schools?

Millions of students and parents have been voting in classrooms, schools, community centers, state capitols and even hospital rooms all across the nation all day and reporting their vote totals to their state or national election headquarters. Each state has been tallying its results and sending them to national election headquarters. The press is flashing results over the airwaves.

Who will be elected the next president of the United States? Which party will win control of the Senate? The House? Who will be elected the next governor? What issues matter most to students throughout the state? Throughout the nation?

Miraculously, by the end of the evening all votes have been counted. They will be recounted the next day for accuracy, but it is not the numbers that matter. Mock Election Day is the culmination of months of learning the power of participation in our democracy.

Past Participants have this to say:

In Pennsylvania, Mary Beth Nanna, then in the 7th grade, wrote, “One day in September in Mrs. Raptosh’s class, we were talking about voting and the importance of it. I raised my hand and confessed that my parents didn’t vote. Mrs. Raptosh told me that I should convince them to register and vote. She explained that every vote counted, and one vote could make a difference. When I thought about it, I realized that they should vote, because people fought and died for a right that so many people today take for granted. So I went home and told them about my day. I didn’t think they would take me seriously, and at first they didn’t. They just said no. Mrs. Raptosh encouraged me to keep trying, and I did. After about a month I proved my point and they registered ... [and] they voted for the first time. Now I see to it that they vote in every election, and I will try too when I’m old enough. I can now say that my parents vote, and be proud of it.”

Utah’s *Deseret News* carried this story on Friday, Nov. 3, 2000, written by Dainon Moody:

“For at least a handful of students, this mock election took on almost as much meaning as the real deal. For Kellie Mudrow’s third-grade class at Lincoln Elementary in Layton, several of her students hail from outside the United States — Venezuela, Peru, Chile, Mexico — and are not yet citizens. Result? Their families are very excited for their children to get to vote, since they can’t do so yet.

‘Their families aren’t going to get the opportunity to vote at all, so I think [the students] felt like they were going to vote for their families,’ Mudrow said. ‘Some others are excited to have an adult-type political experience, but for these kids, it’s an opportunity for them to feel like they’re real Americans.’

“Some were even given copies of the ballots used in the election on request of their parents, who wanted to see what one looked like. One little boy who speaks almost no English was proud to announce that he knew which presidential candidate he was going to vote for.

“When he walked out of the booth, he was glowing. He wouldn’t take off his ‘I Voted’ sticker and just kept saying, ‘Tell my mama, tell my mama.’

“Students whose parents are citizens also were excited with the experience, one they admitted they didn’t think they’d have before age 18. ‘Every vote counts. And you don’t just vote, you want to try and see why you’re voting for that person,’ Matt Martin, a West Bountiful Elementary fourth-grader said. ‘It’s important to vote so we have a choice of who we want instead of the government being able to say “This is our president” and stuff.’”

In Oklahoma, Dawn wrote via e-mail, “I was one of the kids who voted in the first “mock election” back in 1980. Did it again in 1984 and 1988. In 1992, I cast my first vote in the actual voting booth, and I haven’t missed an election since. Why? Because someone cared enough to start and struggle to maintain a project aimed at teaching little ones the importance of voting...those “mock elections” made an impression; the “habit” of voting was firmly imprinted by 1988, enough so that I was a bit annoyed at the fact that I couldn’t actually go to the polls...there would be...fewer voters out there today if it weren’t for that wonderful non-profit voter education project.”

“...I participated in an event, the Mock Election...that saw students hungry to learn about issues, hungry to experience the right to vote, and hungry to speak their minds about issues relevant to their lives. It was one of the top three events in my teaching career of ten years.”

Sandra Lippee, formerly of Scripps Ranch High School, California

“The research is clear – getting young people involved in the local and national political process as they come to citizenship age is a vital aspect of engaging them as empowered participants in the political system. The National Student/Parent Mock Election is an organization that is committed to that goal and has a long history of energizing local connections that facilitate participation.”

Professor Anne Hildreth, Dept. of Political Science, State University of New York, Albany



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Secretary of State Jay Dardenne

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GeauxVote Smart provides teachers with the tools to instill in Louisiana youth an understanding and appreciation of American democracy and equip them with the desire and skills for active civic involvement.

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